

## **Columbia County Shooting Range**

Promoting of hunting, shooting sports and hunter safety is a long standing objective within the DNR. One element is an ongoing effort to provide public shooting ranges (rifle and pistol) as accessible, environmentally friendly and safe locations for hunters and shooters to shoot and sight-in rifles and handguns.

The ability to build new and improve existing is based on available funding through the Federal Wildlife Restoration Program/Pittman-Robertson, an excise tax on the sales of firearm, archery equipment and ammunition. Recent sales of firearms and ammunition has increased the funding available for the DNR to put towards the public shooting range program including new public ranges, improving existing ranges and providing grants to private ranges.

Using Pittman-Robertson (PR) funds for shooting range improvements and development is giving back to those pay into the system and also impacts future PR funding.

### **Statewide Public Shooting Ranges**

Current availability of shooting ranges on public property occurs in the less populated northern half of Wisconsin with 28 public shooting ranges north of highway 10. The higher populated southern part of Wisconsin offers 6 public shooting ranges only 2 are located within easy driving distance of Wisconsin's high population density areas of Dane, Waukesha and Milwaukee area. These 3 counties also represent 13% of the deer gun license sale.

Based on customer need the DNR will continue to look for opportunities to address the shooting range needs of hunters and shooters living in southern Wisconsin.

In addition to public shooting range the DNR also offers shooting range improvement grants to private shooting ranges, organization and clubs. The grant is in exchange for additional public shooting opportunities at these private ranges.

### **Why Columbia County**

- Approved 2012 Columbia County Master Plan process demonstrated an interest and need for a public shooting range in Columbia County. The master planning process involved an extensive public input opportunities including 2 open house session attended by over 90 citizens, elected state and local officials and organization representatives. In addition the draft master plan was release in the media, 8 local libraries and distributed through over 235 emails to local government officials, citizens and interested organizations.
- Since the late 1990 local DNR staff worked with conservation organizations and Columbia County Sporting Alliance to establish a public shooting range in Columbia County. During this process a potential site was determined but did not

pass the archeological survey. Current funding availability allows the DNR to move forward with the process again.

- Local support developing a shooting range in Columbia County is supported by the Columbia County Sporting Alliance. At the 2013 Conservation Congress Spring Hearing a resolution (11-02-13) to construct a public shooting range in Columbia County was supported.
- Columbia County approved DNR reference establishing a shooting range on county owned property with funding through the DNR. The DNR supported the idea and funding however the Columbia County Board did not support a shooting range on Columbia County property.
- Columbia County being within easy driving distance of a large high population density area connects directly to the DNR effort to locate public shooting ranges by the demand of Wisconsin population centers. The counties bordering Columbia Co make up over 10% of the total deer gun license sales also supporting the customer based for a public shooting range. Based on a recent survey Columbia County has two private or club rifle/pistol shooting ranges.

### **Process for a Public Shooting Range**

Based on historical efforts by DNR staff and recent interest DNR staff local to Columbia County reviewed and evaluated all the DNR owned properties in Columbia County to create a list of potential shooting range sites. The evaluation looked at a variety of elements of siting a shooting range including but not limited to; topography, wetland concerns, current property use, proximity to residences and accessibility. This process created a list of 7 potential sites located in 3 Columbia County Townships.

The DNR next step would be to create an Ad-Hoc work group involving representatives from DNR, local elected officials, Columbia Counting Sporting Alliance, Conservation Congress and other conservation organizations. The Ad-Hoc group would work through a process to develop evaluation criteria and ultimately narrow the 7 sites to 2 sites.

The DNR would start the required archeological survey of the 2 sites. During the required survey the DNR would hold a public input process to obtain citizen feedback and input on the 2 sites. The public input would be evaluated and used to determine the finalized site.

## Timeline

Based on the number of steps and potential influences (weather, design, bids) the timeline below is an estimate.

